

AGILUS

GIPPSLAND COMMUNITY SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE GIPPSLAND FORESTRY INDUSTRY



**GIPPSLAND
FORESTRY HUB**
Promoting the Forestry Industry

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INTRODUCTION

Agilus have been engaged by Gippsland Forestry Hub (GFHub) to undertake an independent and objective assessment of community views, knowledge and perceptions which will support future efforts by GFHub and its members to engage Gippslanders.

The Gippsland Communication and Analysis project objectives are:

1. Engage with key stakeholders to analyse their perceptions and knowledge of the Gippsland Forestry Industry.
2. Review the feedback and develop recommendations for how the industry can engage with the community and stakeholders in the future.

The GFHub have developed a 30 year strategy that includes a range of strategic statements including the following intent:

The strategic intent is for the Gippsland forest and forest products industry to identify, develop and implement innovative solutions that support the continued growth of the forest and forest products sectors in Gippsland with broad community support and industry buy-in, supported by a well-resourced and functioning Hub.

In relation to this project, the *'with broad community support'* statement in the strategic intent is critical in supporting the GFHub and its members in achieving the outcomes identified within the 30 year strategy. Community views include positive and negative perceptions of the Forestry Industry, and, if not encouraged to focus on the positive aspects of the industry, may create challenges in the implementation of the strategy.

This project involves consultation with key industry stakeholders including business advocacy groups, municipalities and other interested organisations in the success of the Gippsland Forestry Industry (List of organisations on page 5). The purpose of the engagement sessions with the various industry representatives, is to identify the views of the Forestry Industry and the organisations that operate within the sector. The engagement sessions will also identify ways to improve the messaging and how the industry can demonstrate their positive contribution to the community.

GIPPSLAND OVERVIEW

Gippsland is located in the south eastern part of Victoria. It covers an area of 41,556 m² east of Cardinia Shire, bounded to the north by the mountain ranges and the plateaus and highlands on the Victorian High Country, to the southwest by Western Port Bay, to the south and southeast by Bass Strait and the Tasman Sea, and to the east and northeast by the eastern most section of the Victorian/NSW border.

Within Gippsland 40% of the population lives in towns and settlements of less than 1000 people ([Data by region | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)).



Figure 1 - Map of Gippsland in relation to Victoria

The Gippsland region is generally divided into five sub-regions with six municipalities. In 2016 Gippsland had a population of 271,266 ([Data by region | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)).

The five sub regions are: –

- West Gippsland
- South Gippsland
- Latrobe Valley
- Central Gippsland and,
- East Gippsland

The Gippsland Region includes the following municipalities:

- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Wellington Shire Council
- Latrobe City Council
- South Gippsland Shire Council
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- Bass Coast Shire Council

Gippsland is best known for its primary production such as mining, power generation, forestry, and farming as well as its tourist destinations.

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai and Bunurong people as the Traditional Custodians of Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

To meet the project objectives, the following methodology was utilised to achieve the project outcome:

1. Engage with the client to confirm the approach and time frames.
2. Develop a series of engagement questions to explore the views of the GFHub, the Forestry Industry and how they support the work of the Forestry Industry. (See Appendix A).
3. Engage with an agreed list of people and organisations including the six local governments within Gippsland, key advocacy groups government agencies. Engagement will be primarily through interviews with representatives of the organisations.
4. Using the feedback and responses to the engagement sessions, develop a report that outlines the feedback and makes recommendations for future external communication opportunities. (See Appendix A).
5. Submit a draft report to Gippsland Forestry Hub for review and feedback prior to finalising the report.

The organisations consulted include:

- Traralgon Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Committee for Gippsland
- Food and Fibre Gippsland
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Yarram Secondary College
- Regional Development Victoria (RDV)
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLAWAC)

The consultation with these organisations commenced with an email outlining the desire to engage with them and the topic of the discussions. As required, the email was followed up with a phone call to find a suitable time to conduct the interview. The interview questions that were worked through are provided in Appendix A. Attempts were made to engage with other organisations, however due to time constraints, this did not eventuate.



TIMELINE
AGREED



QUESTIONS
DEVELOPED



ENGAGEMENT
WITH KEY
STAKEHOLDERS



FEEDBACK
CONSOLIDATED



REPORT
PREPARED

Figure 2 - Project methodology

OUTCOME OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The stakeholder engagement was a positive experience with all interviewees expressing strong support for the Forestry Industry. A summary of the feedback is provided in Appendix B.

All of them had prior understanding of the importance of the industry to the Gippsland economy. They also had a high level of understanding of the importance of sending a positive message to the community to ensure that they were aware of the variety of activities and how the sector operates.

The knowledge and understanding of the participants were shown in the response to Question 2 where their understanding of the forestry sector within Gippsland indicated the following:



Figure 3 - Key feedback from stakeholders

The representatives were geographically located across Gippsland and provided highly consistent responses in relation to how the industry was perceived and how they believed it could be improved into the future.

THEMES

Following the analysis of the feedback from the interviews, it was found that the responses were consistent with each other. This enabled the identification of themes which have been individually addressed below.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

The feedback indicates that the key challenge with community perception is a result of the mixed messages that they were receiving. Table 1 provides examples of these messages.

Table 1 - example of mixed messages

NEGATIVE		POSITIVE
Forestry is closing because of State Government policy changes.		Numerous job opportunities are available within the forestry sector.
It is a declining industry and towns in East Gippsland are struggling and this is likely to expand.		Career and training paths are available within the forestry sector.
Forestry is bad for the environment and the destruction of trees is devastating.	vs	Plantation timber will meet the future demands of the Gippsland based industries.
There is confusion that the State Government decision to close native forest logging and where the future pulp and timber needs will come from.		Operators are using high tech equipment.
		Forestry is operating in accordance with Federal and State environmental obligations.

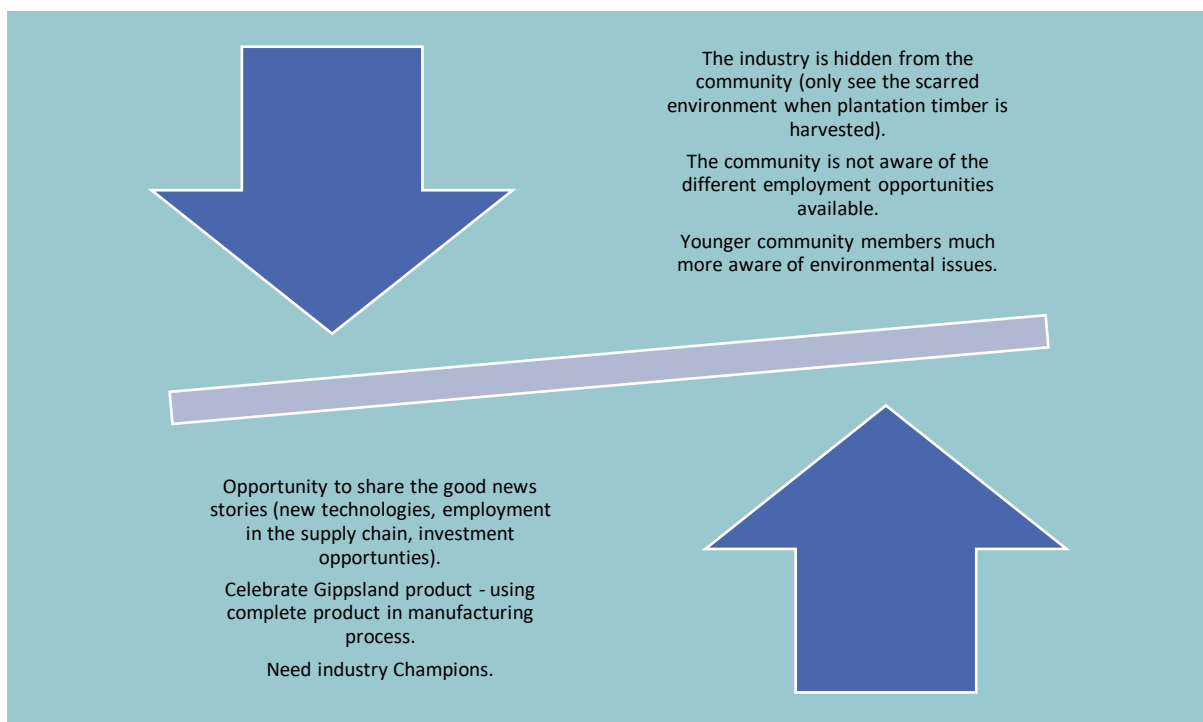


Figure 4 - Example of balancing perceptions

This confusion and competing messaging create challenges for the community and allied industries to have certainty about the future of forestry and its place in the future of Gippsland. News reports on social media platforms and interest groups websites can often represent opposing views that create confusion for the community.

There is no doubt that there is an element of misinformation that portrays negativity about the Forestry Industry. This misinformation, when not supported or met with incorrect information, can

manifest into incorrect perceptions of the truth. The outcome of this may result in uncertainty in the industry and a misconception that the industry is struggling.

Feedback also indicated that there is a lack of understanding regarding the importance of forestry in the supply chain. This extends from the plantation to the end product which could items as basic as tissues and books through to more complex products including furniture and houses.

The mixed messaging can lead to uncertainty about the role that the Forestry Industry plays in the Gippsland economy. This also affects the view of the Gippsland community and the next generation of job seekers that no longer see the industry as an opportunity to obtain a job that provides a career path and a positive investment opportunity.



Figure 5 - Example news article creating a perception of uncertainty.

EMPLOYMENT

The second theme was around the topic of employment.

The feedback from those who participated in the survey was again consistent and included information such as skills shortages, job security uncertainties, the role of innovation, education and mentoring opportunities.

The overarching feedback was that the future of the industry was positive however this was being challenged in some sectors and was unfortunately having a detrimental impact on encouraging future generations to choose this industry as a career. The feedback overwhelmingly identified the future opportunities within the sector but equally indicated a lack of entry level roles.

It was seen by employers that the lack of educational opportunities as a result of few training providers offering the courses and qualifications identified as required by industry was seen as a key factor discouraging employers taking on new entrants into the sector. Further, as a result of the lack of training and education opportunities, school leavers are not supported in entering the industry.

There was a lack of understanding within the community of the wide variety of jobs and potential careers within the forestry sector. The opportunities being spread across silviculture, harvesting, environmental studies, machine operation, drone operation through to processing was not widely understood within the community, and, in particular by the next generation of school leavers, or the school-based staff that provided careers advice.

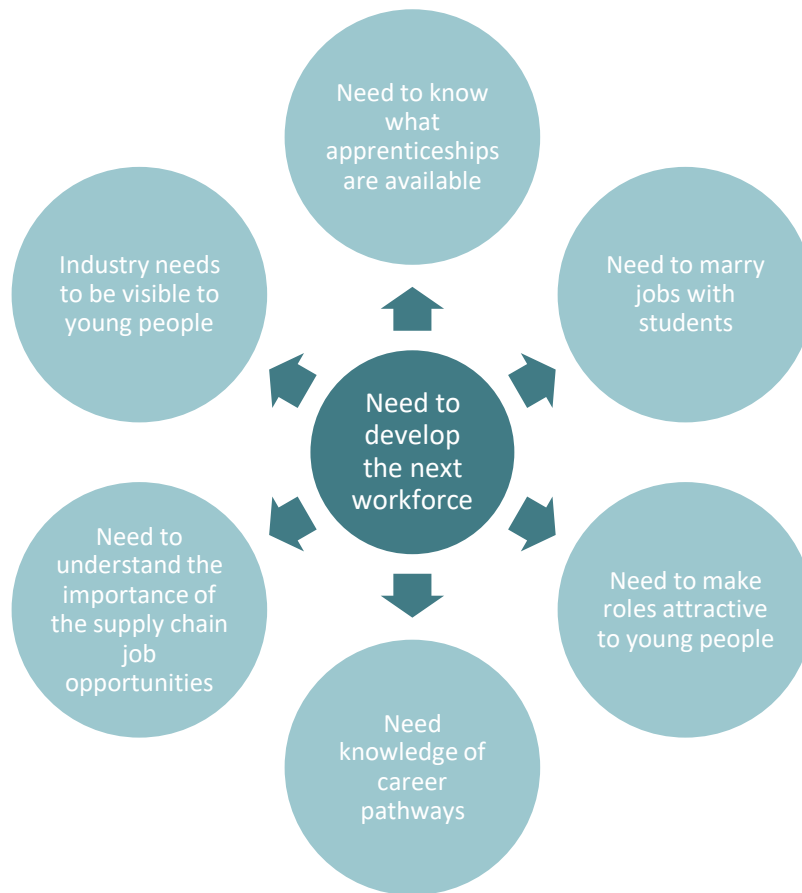


Figure 6 - Key activities to develop the next generation workforce

COMMUNICATION

The majority of the feedback provided in the context of communication was supportive of the industry developing positive stories. It was widely understood that the Forestry Industry is important to the Gippsland economy, offers many opportunities to future job seekers and contributes to attracting jobs into remote areas of Gippsland.

However, the feedback also acknowledges that the vast majority of the activities such as operating high-tech equipment, environmental studies, drone operation and other processes was not seen by the majority of the community as it nearly always occurred in remote locations. While there is a wide understanding of the value of the Forestry Industry to Gippsland, there is some members of the community may not even understand or know that there is an extensive Forestry Industry operating within remote areas of the region.

A number of those interviewed indicated that a stronger role in communicating the positives of the industry was required. This would enable the community to see the factual elements of the industry. Several story topics were proposed, and these included: Table 2 - Potential communication topics

TOPIC	EXAMPLES
Advanced technology machinery	High tech machinery including harvesting equipment, drones, sensing equipment and other technology could be portrayed to the community.

Industry and job security	The connection between a tree and the day-to-day products that are used in our homes and workplaces. Without these products there is so much that can't and won't happen in our daily lives.
Sustainable forestry	The increasing use of plantation timber and how this is used to support existing native vegetation areas. The plantations provide vegetation connectivity for numerous native faunae including koalas and kangaroos.
Broad job opportunities	The varied roles within the industry are a strength and a strong focus on how every day can be different. Portray the various roles including machine operation, vegetation assessment, drone operation and firefighting.
Industry security	Focus on the Government's commitment to a plantation-based industry in Victoria and how this will be a strong focus within the Gippsland Region for many years to come.

The feedback indicated that the industry now needed to talk itself up. While the historical tree harvesting methods including dozers and chains no longer occurs, there is, however, still a perception within some community members that this continues to occur today.

Positive communication from the employers and the broader industry will go some way to demonstrating to current and future Gippsland community members that this industry cares about its future and is operating to high standards. In addition to this is the elevated environmental and occupational health and safety regulatory controls compliance requirement.

A stakeholder provided an example of other industry groups proactively supporting positive perceptions of the Forestry Industry. Figure 7 is a screen shot from the Food and Fibre Gippsland website that outlines the career opportunities within the Forestry Industry.



Timber

The timber industry is evolving and so are the jobs and career paths. There are many jobs to learn more about, whether it's in a family owned timber yard or with one of Australia's largest private timber plantation companies – find out more by clicking on the job titles below.

- [Administration Manager](#)
- [Irrigation Specialist](#)
- [Seed Orchard Technician](#)
- [Boiler Operator](#)
- [Nursery Worker](#)
- [Timber Mill Operator](#)
- [Head of Maintenance](#)
- [Plantation Nursery Worker](#)
- [Timber Nursery Worker](#)

Consider a career in Forestry ...

Meet the people who head up two of Gippsland's forestry and timber businesses. Have a listen to what they look for in an employee and understand what it's like to work in their industry.



Owner | Operator – Alberton Timber
Luke Olarenshaw



Nursery Manager – HVP Plantations
Nathan Milne



Click on the logo to
meet the Alberton
Timber Team



Click on the logo to
meet the HVP
Plantations Team

Figure 7 - sourced from <https://www.foodandfibregippsland.com.au/this-is-my-job#timber>

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The overall feedback was highly positive whilst understanding the challenges with the community's perception of the industry creating uncertainty.

The need to develop a positive image of the Forestry Industry and its role within the Gippsland community was seen as a significant pathway to resolve current issues such as attracting future generations to recognise the career possibilities within the forestry sector.

There are a wide range of organisations commenting on the forestry sector including environmental groups, political parties, and the industry itself. All these messages often compete. The messages vary from strong support to in some cases non-factual information that portrays the Forestry Industry in a negative light.

“The community perceive that forestry is about chopping down trees and not necessarily making cardboard, furniture or other household items.”

“There is an opportunity to promote locally grown as a concept.”

“Engagement with younger people is really important.”

“Kids super aware of climate challenges.”

“Talking positively about the solution would be really good.”

The feedback all identified the challenges of recruiting workers to the industry and maintaining this through the provision of training. Often the feedback indicated that this was related to uncertainty of the Forestry Industry. The negative stories often dominated the media platforms and positive stories were not a common occurrence. In the context of education, there was also a lack of understanding of the requirements of the industry in regard to the training and education of a new and existing workforce.

The challenge for the Forestry Industry is how they can ensure messaging is a result of factually based and positive information being circulated to the community. The focus should be on attracting school leavers and new entrants to the sector so that they see this as an industry in which they can make a difference.

The next generation of workers within the Forestry Industry are very aware of the importance of protecting and maintaining the environment. School children have an increased understanding of the impacts of climate change and other environmental issues. Their career choices are likely to be influenced by how they or their parents perceive the industry that they are considering as their career.

The feedback strongly indicated support for the Forestry Industry and believed that providing effective communication opportunities were pursued, the industry would succeed and become a highly valued part of Gippsland through increased employment, developing their workforces and contributing to the economy.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The response to the interviews identified a number of opportunities to change how the industry is perceived and identify additional communication opportunities to raise the understanding and positive views of the industry.

1. Encourage the individual businesses operating within the Forestry Industry to regularly identify media and positive story opportunities. Positive messaging could include the purchase of new high-tech equipment, employment of new staff, collaborations with other organisations or commitment to research programs.
2. Promote the opportunity to live and work locally within Gippsland.
3. Overview of the end-to-end processes and how each employer contributes to the creation of a product that is used daily.
4. Greater integration with Traditional Owner organisations such as GLAWAC to ensure that the forestry activities are seen to consider culturally important areas and practices.
5. Strengthen relationships and communication with community organisations including education and employment, and community and industry associations by ensuring involvement in and liaising with relevant organisations and community groups. This will ensure that factual and positive information is provided to the community in regard to the Forestry Industry and its activities.

Community perception of the Gippsland Forestry Hub (GFHub)

Background info on GFHub (from website)

- Supporting a sustainable forest and wood products industry
- The forestry and forest products industry is made up of businesses including those involved in:
 - growing and harvesting trees
 - processing wood and wood fibre
 - manufacturing pulp, paper and engineered products, along with reconstituted and solid wood products
 - marketing and research.
- Gippsland Forestry Hub aims to make the forest and wood products industry sustainable by identifying future opportunities for this growing sector. To achieve this we:
 - support local and regional communities to thrive
 - improve public perceptions
 - and raise awareness in the region of the career opportunities and employment pathways in the sectors.

Understanding of the functions and role of the forestry sector in Gippsland

Understanding why forestry is not first choice of employment

What region do you represent:

- Baw Baw
- Latrobe
- South Coast
- Bass Coast
- Wellington
- East Gippsland
- All Gippsland

What is your understanding of how the forestry sector operates in Gippsland?

- Tick if any of these were identified
 - Employment opportunities
 - Investment opportunities
 - future demand
 - plantation potential
 - incentives for new plantations
 - Carbon capture
 - carbon credits
 - Innovation
 - Sustainable industry
 - Contributing to the Gippsland economy
 - Fibre
 - Timber security
 - Education and training

- No understanding
 - What opportunities do you see for forestry to increase its profile in the community?

Are you aware of the employment opportunities within forestry in Gippsland?

- Tick if any of these were identified
 - Timber harvesting
 - Farm forestry
 - Silviculture
 - Conservation
 - Fire management and prevention
 - Research and innovation

How is forestry perceived in the Gippsland community / industry sector?

- Positive
- Negative
- Unsure

Why do you believe this?

What do you know about the issues facing forestry in Gippsland?

- What's happening now?
- What of that is good?
- What is not so good?
- What should happen?

How does the forestry sector keep community/industry updated on its activities?

- What could this look like?

Are you aware of any good news stories promoted by the forestry sector?

- Research & innovation
- Responsible wood community grants

Where do you see opportunities for the forestry sector to have greater community engagement?

- Why?

WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE FORESTRY SECTOR OPERATES IN GIPPSLAND?

- Employment opportunities
- Investment opportunities
 - future demand
 - plantation potential
 - incentives for new plantations
 - Carbon capture
 - carbon credits
- Innovation
- Sustainable industry
- Contributing to the Gippsland economy
- Fibre
- Timber security
- Education and training

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Good understanding of the forestry sector in Gippsland including impacts of transitioning from native harvesting to plantation timber

Established industry with a long history

Importance of forestry in the supply chain; transport, construction

Need to sell optimism is going to be an important strategy

RESPONSES

Has a good understanding of forestry:

- Aware of:
 - employment opportunities – skills shortages
 - future demand
 - plantation opportunities
 - sustainable industry
 - contribution to Gippsland economy
 - timber security
 - education and training
- Plantation through to harvest through to manufacturing
- Timber mills in the far East supply mills
- Flow on benefits through the supply chain
 - Contractors
 - Transport
 - Logistics
- Multiple industries have a reliance on forestry
 - Construction

Has a good understanding of forestry:

- Plantation timber
- Native forest to harvesting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paper processing ○ Advanced manufacturing – ASH, building sector ○ Bio Mass (driven by forestry) • Opportunity for native and plantation timber and in the supply chain
<p>Does not have a broad knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large pockets of plantations run by HPV • Publics view on native timber skewered by anti-forestry movement • These views cloud the opportunities within the Forestry Industry • F&F recently involved in the HPV ‘My Job’ series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A great education tool ○ Need more of this to expand on the roles within forestry; much more than chopping down trees
<p>Involved in getting the GFH established when at Latrobe City Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two types of forestry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native forestry ○ Plantation harvesting • Full value of timber is not fully realised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Australian Paper burn lignin is burnt to power the site where it could be used into other products ○ Demonstrate to the community to full potential of trees – this would go a long way to support or to change perceptions • Investment opportunities – only small opportunities in Bass Coast following on from the work in agroforestry work just starting • Climate change perspective – growing timber in a 25 year cycle will be difficult (fire, flood, droughts), shorter cycle crops will become important • Bamboo or hemp – alternative processes/products that can be used in building materials – innovative and becoming more acceptable
<p>Reasonable understanding; still learning about saw mills and processes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with Gippsland Forestry Hub • Young people do not understand what the Forestry Industry is about even though their parents work in sector; nursery and mills • They understand forestry is about chopping down trees • There is a barrier around knowledge • Career expos have a range of industries come to talk to students (defence forces, trades) and students see these opportunities as exciting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies • Mill owners and ancillary business that support the timber industry across Gippsland; logging, driving & processing • Working through timber transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approximately 2500 – 6000 employees could be impacted ○ 4 communities identified in the Victoria Forest Plan; Orbost, Swifts Creek, Nowa Nowa & Bendoc. Advocating for Cann River to be included • Will be difficult to find like for like jobs and wages parity • Need to know what these new jobs in forestry could look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the new technology hi-tech jobs and what could they look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeding using helicopters • Need to sell optimism is going to be an important strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established industry and the lifeblood of a number of towns • Once was an area of employment for Aboriginal people, not so much now

- Younger generation less supportive; environmental & cultural reason, misinformation
- Not seen as a career pathway:
 - old growth logging to cease
 - not seen as an accessible pathway to Aboriginals
 - less entry roles now
- Vic Forests
 - Does not have a great reputation
 - Method of logging does not appeal
 - Want to see country healing

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE FOR FORESTRY TO INCREASE ITS PROFILE IN THE COMMUNITY?

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Need to address uncertainty in the sector – impacts employment, investment opportunities

Education seen as key to improving knowledge and understanding – employment, career pathways

Doing things together

RESPONSES

Opportunities to increase profile:

- Key factor is to address the uncertainty around the sector:
 - 2 sides of government – each with different views
 - Labour/Greens
 - Uncertainty around plantation, harvesting, future
 - Liberal/National
 - Conservative approach
- In Victoria:
 - Melbourne based mindset
 - Not talking with locals
 - Most impacted region in Victoria
- Uncertainty causes confusion
 - Coal
 - Forestry
- Makes investment risky

Opportunities to increase profile:

- Challenges around the native timber transition
- “Gippsland Grown”:
 - Lack of understanding of where timber comes from
 - Locally grown resource
 - End to end supply chain
 - Jobs pathway
 - Boost production through increased demand
- Education:
 - Greater understanding of where timber comes from
 - Ethics of industry
 - Native timber:
 - Where does it come from?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is a well-maintained resource • Opportunity to promote what is grown locally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End to end process ○ Jobs pathways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation timber is an untapped opportunity to change perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different needs for different regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orbost – high profile, community understands well ○ Melbourne – understanding required on forestry management ○ East Gippsland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for native forestry ▪ Vocal local environmental groups ▪ Range of views within the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge; perception vs reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perception – cutting down old growth which is supported by political agendas ○ Reality – sustainable and a renewable resource • Confusions leads to uncertainty and not seen as a career pathway for young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery project - stalled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The right approach by doing things together ○ Back to healing country ○ Demonstrates connectivity ○ Made progress with cultural heritage

ARE YOU AWARE OF THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN FORESTRY IN GIPPSLAND?

- Timber harvesting
- Farm forestry
- Silviculture
- Conservation
- Fire management and prevention
- Research and innovation

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Education seen as key to improving knowledge and understanding – employment, career pathways

What are the career pathways? Lack of understanding what types of roles available including roles in the supply chain

Uncertainty in sector

Lack of entry level roles

RESPONSES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silviculture - GLAWAC • Fire Management – risks association with bushfires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ However, reactive/political approach causes more confusion in the industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ East Gippsland – lack of harvest ▪ Funds remain in bushfire recovery • Research & Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Should be promoted (no stories)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest opportunity for investment • Example OpalANZ Australian Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1500 employees ○ Would have a greater impact on the region if closed (less employees than Hazelwood)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills shortages in harvesting • Employment opportunities in construction and manufacturing (using timber products or other fibres) • Opportunities to attract jobs as region transitions away from coal • Supply chain employment opportunities – transport • Sees an opportunity to promote to high school leavers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apprenticeships ○ On the job training ○ Students need to be inspired by sector ○ Attract young people to stay in region • Promote the opportunity to live and work locally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message is being missed on the career opportunities • Due to the length of time to grow trees, there is a real opportunity for employment longevity in the sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Future demands – construction, supply chain • Need stories to show career pathways • Entry point jobs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of training for entry level roles ○ Not enough industry or government structure for entry level courses and awareness of training opportunities ○ Need to replace workers who are nearing retirement, eg truck drivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ losing knowledge ▪ impart specialised knowledge onto new staff ○ Need to provide experience to younger people ○ Need to identify ambassadors / develop mentor programs • OHS has changed significantly over the last 20 years
<p>A big focus for Bass Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, think about chopping trees, however, goes from silviculture, to harvesting, to plantation, processing, drone operation (looking for native animals), environment studies • End to end processes – growing, cultivating, planting right through to processing end products, sales, and distribution • Different skills sets required • Different education and training required • Forestry is interconnected •
<p>East Gippsland is based around native forests with some plantations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainly has been created since the government announcing Timber Release Plan to transition from native timber after 2030 • Major challenge around how to operate during transition • Ongoing forestry and roads maintenance • Public sector investment required to assist with transition of jobs away from native forestry • Strategies required for new plantations and farm forestry • Need to address the level of concern about farmland being converted to plantations • Need to understand the opportunities for farm forestry • Existing sawmills need to secure new supply; outside region, smaller dimensions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people see the \$ by working in a trade, eg diesel mechanic in the mines • Don't realise that they could work locally and make good money • Forestry seen as dirty work and not operating a \$1m piece of equipment • Skills shortages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to develop the next workforce ○ Need knowledge of career pathways ○ Need to know what apprenticeships are available ○ Need to marry jobs with students ○ Need to make roles attractive to young people ○ Industry needs to be visible to young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment opportunities around a range of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education ○ Plantation management ○ Supply chain; harvesting, haulage ○ Agri business ○ Nurseries ○ Value adding in the manufacturing process, eg Australian Paper • There are a lot more choices now for young people rather than the traditional sectors and pathways due to the modern economy, eg cyber security vs forestry • Forestry will be a smaller niche industry come 2030 • Challenge will be for industry to talk the industry up and opportunity up and then communicate that to relevant communities • This conversation will be long term as it will take 20 years for new plantations to be ready for harvesting • Don't hear about technology being used in the sector, eg Heyfield mill, OpalANZ • Needs a short, sharp marketing narrative about opportunities including opportunities in the supply chain • There will be a plantation based in Gippsland from 2030 – need to sell narrative with key stakeholders and partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OpalANZ – key champion – important to us, we are innovative, put sector on the map in this region ○ Major institutions – HPV – supply chain ○ Wellington Shire & Latrobe City Council – need to be more vocal on how vital the sector is – community engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees are required for timber felling and milling • Fire management and prevention - unsure of continued road maintenance in forests as this had been done by loggers – will need to be done, but who will pay for it? • East Gippsland will be severely impacted as plantations may not be a viable option for the region. State forests cover 75% of East Gippsland • Other land usage includes farming, sheep & cattle, agriculture – no big tracks of land available for plantations • Transition incentives – what does this look like? • Shrinking opportunities for the workforce • Other career pathways with Parks Victoria (preservation, restoration, maintenance, protection from bushfires, forest management)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to sell the health and management of country • Need to manage cultural heritage • Don't deliver projects in isolation; need to work together, in partnership • Need to create interest in opportunities; break it down, make it of interest to the Aboriginal community

- Fire management – small fires in country
- Research – habitats – need a welfare element

HOW IS FORESTRY PERCEIVED IN THE GIPPSLAND COMMUNITY / INDUSTRY SECTOR?

- Positive
- Negative
- Mixed
- Unsure

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

General mixed perceptions mainly due to conflicting messaging; demographics of each region

Sector needs to talk itself up – managed resource / importance in supply chain /

Need champion / ambassadors

RESPONSES

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure of the community's perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ mixed messages • Unsure of industry can embrace a positive perception when all the facts are not known • The only message heard "industry coming to a halt" |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many locals may have had a close connection to timber industry in the past (20 years ago or so) • By large a well-regulated industry, safety standards and sustainable • Some sectors well engaged, eg processors • Others in the supply chain may not understand why not able to meet demand (eg builders) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community – perceived with a closed lens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not have a big picture lens to see the opportunities and that Forestry is viable and interesting ○ Do not see the real opportunity to get in at entry level and indefinitely where there are some true valuable and solid and stimulating career paths • Industry perception: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jobs and careers there could be opportunities to get subsidised training or scholarships • Media muddled because of vocal minority • Opportunities to demonstrate where people can transfer skills sets |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, a negative community perception driving by lack of understanding • A greater understanding of carbon capture and storage – processing, storage and capturing – is required • Negative because of past history of harvesting native timber; bulldozers, chains, old methods. Not how it is done these days • As we move away from plastics, and as consumers become more aware of issues with plastics, more of an understanding will change perception • Need engagement with younger people is really important • Strong climate narrative that forestry can portray and contribute to • Kids super aware climate challenges • Talking positively about the solution would be really good • Early engagement important |

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education – grow people’s understanding • Forestry sector in Bass Coast is small, not as visible as in East Gippsland and Wellington – people do not see it “out of sight, out of mind” therefore going off perceptions of yesteryear
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical differences in perceptions between plantation timber and native timber harvesting • There is not a high degree of confidence in forest management. Polarised views: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What we have always done ○ How native timber can be harvested • Disconnect between the love of timber and the dislike of harvesting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarnished view because of lack of knowledge and various political agenda • Once people have a better understanding of the whole forestry sector, the views become more positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk up the sector • Key messaging around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The good in the sector ○ This is who we are ○ This is where we are going • HPV external comms • Local government with timber towns and strong comms around opportunities around plantations • OpalANZ – need to be prominent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong vote in East Gippsland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In favour of plantation time ○ unique environment • Divided view in the community • Lot of uncertainty • Need to look at what the alternatives are, eg Parks Victoria employment opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the demographics of each particular region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Normal part of rural life ○ Others would not see as an appropriate activity ○ Focus on farm forestry – however, more information required; knowledge and practicability

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ISSUES FACING FORESTRY IN GIPPSLAND?

- What’s happening now?
- What of that is good?
- What is not so good?
- What should happen?

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Need storytelling

Disconnect from the community

Misinformation

RESPONSES

- Industry needs to say what their take on it is

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the industry stance? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where's quotes from industry ○ There are no good news stories in the media • 20% of industry flows from forestry in Gippsland • Unsure of the percentage of employment – could be only 5% • Who are the champions of the industry? • Recruitment agency runs a number of ads for ASH weekly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No take up ○ Why don't people want to work there??
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to work to improve what Gippsland can produce and what are the opportunities for jobs and supply • Lift the profile of "Grow Gippsland" with education • Fibre alternatives are not well promoted • Need to promote the end products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education via schools ○ Show skills required to produce end product ○ Show the sustainability aspects of production • Identify job pathways • Promote lifestyle • Engage with education providers (Uni, TAFE, RTOs) to promote pathways • Develop a pride and sense of origin for locally harvested timber via education programs, local production, and advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough visual awareness and that first-person endorsement of where the opportunities are to have a great career or enjoyable job • Plantations are not visible – middle of nowhere – rarely see people on site! • It is a busy and engaging workplace – need stories to show "the day in the life"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lot of options available for small communities following government announcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native forest harvesting stopped immediately ○ Remote locations with significant local impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnect from community • Need to get balance right; those that understand the history and those who are not interested • Need to deal with misinformation early • People are moving out of the industry

HOW DOES THE FORESTRY SECTOR KEEP COMMUNITY/INDUSTRY UPDATED ON ITS ACTIVITIES?

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Communication; not one size fits all

RESPONSES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good news stories • Only see industrial action stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs great advocacy around the transition away from native timber to plantation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is needed for plantation growth? ○ What are the new fibres – trees, plants? • Create a modern identity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemp (grows quickly) may appeal to younger consumers and is a developing sector • Explain the different ways of using timber
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need stories tailored to regions and they will all need a different narrative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently harvested areas look bad; graphic images • A lot more work is required on storytelling to the community. Link to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental changes ○ Fire resilience ○ Grow big trees faster ○ Forest management • Challenge – a reluctance to talk about the “middle space” – community polarised by debates – differing views and portrayal of industry • Use social media for story telling • Need to change the perceptions of careers within forestry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From - traditional views – hard, dirty, no job security ○ To – career opportunities – hi Tech systems, technology, science, job security • Opportunity to tell the story around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Technology ○ A fully utilised resource – end to end process – not wastage ○ Employment opportunities – all career pathways • Reposition and focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Growing a quality product ○ Residual to be used for other products ○ High value usage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting young people to knowledge of the industry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GFH part of the Broadening Horizons ○ Engagement with Star of the South • GFH is the voice for the industry and representative of industry • GFH and industry need to work closely together • Trial recommendations and evaluate success or adjust • Seek government funding for rebranding; election promise - \$300 funds allocated to forestry in Tasmania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDV handling transition packages; businesses transformation • Wellington Shire get briefing when asked • Timber towns will be getting information direct from RDV on transition • East Gippsland – Place Managers in areas impacted by bushfires – connected to recovery programs • Challenge to get content out • Connectivity issues make it difficult for electronic communications • Ageing communities – reluctance to use electric communications – may need to go back to letter drop as a more effective way to communicate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is vital • Not one size fits all – need to tailor to key values of the community

ARE YOU AWARE OF ANY GOOD NEWS STORIES PROMOTED BY THE FORESTRY SECTOR?

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Champions

RESPONSES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASH Timber: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native timber and plantation manufacturing in Gippsland ○ Supporting local communities ○ \$ kept locally • Yarram timber mill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Government support ○ Innovation and technology • Land Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timber workers maintain road ○ Fire management • OpalANZ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aquaculture project ○ Creating local employment • Need to have good news stories come from industry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hemp, new fibre source, sector being innovative • Forestry is an older and more traditional sector, an opportunity for social media stories to be told by C4G, GFH, HPV, ASH, local governments, eg Wellington Shire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberton timber mill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efficient and Hi-Tech ○ Addressing how to do things more efficiently ○ Invest in now for a more efficient and profitable process for the next 10 years • People are passionate about what is happening in the industry and how they can be ambassadors • Timber will also be needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting positives of forestry in a succinct on what are the benefits of forestry – having a clear picture – everyone on same page • Importance and interconnectivity across sectors – eg forestry in paper production, forestry to farming (fences); demonstrate the importance • Numbers get washed over – need real life stories • Promote opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bass Coast working on agriculture and on-farm forestry – harvesting and planting of select trees – part of whole farm plan ○ Lead through sustainability team – renewable source – education piece ○ Need tools and understanding to educate farmers on opportunities – this is what required, this is what the return on investment will be • Forestry investment schemes – in this past let farmers down, some distrust. Single farm may not have scale; link farms together to get economy of scale • Opportunities to link in with other opportunities in carbon farming – look at whole farm plan – eg agri farming, carbon farming – forestry to partner up with other sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at Canada as they have a strong plantation sector with high employment rates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to balance our negative stories with good stories. • Government has gone silent on the commitment to develop a native tree nursery in Nowa Nowa. The lack of communication has made the community are asking what has happened as it was going to generate jobs

WHERE DO YOU SEE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FORESTRY SECTOR TO HAVE GREATER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Connectivity

Education

RESPONSES

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connection into business associations• Grass roots engagement with local businesses:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Information businesses of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ supply chain and the \$ back into the local community▪ tender opportunities▪ benefits of the industry can be demonstrated• Engaging with small businesses• Virtual tours of timber mills<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reality (modern & hi tech) versus perception
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of new products/industries and subsequent supply chain<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ New products○ Value added in the supply chain• Carbon capture<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Environmental opportunities○ Articulate needs and benefits○ Time required to plant and harvest• Education• City vs Country divide<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Approx. 4 in 10,000 trees harvested• Social media• Develop a sense of place of origin, made in Gippsland<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gippsland better regulated than some other overseas areas where the environment and natural habitat is not as a high priority• Opportunity for forestry to engage down the supply chain• Potential for wider industry engagement through advocacy groups such as C4G who are supportive of the sector, both now and into the future• Sector is important for history, products, employment, lifestyle opportunities (live and work in Gippsland)• Attractive investment:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Guarantee of supply○ Utilising resource○ New fibres
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry needs to stand up and be loud and proud of the industry• Opportunity for industry to support to forestry• Needs messaging from the construction industry:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This is how much timber we use every year○ Do you want to grow jobs in Australia or overseas?○ You know where it comes from; locally sourced○ Conditions in the industry

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is how we approach it environmentally in Australia as opposed to some overseas processes, eg work with wildlife support groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have resources on the ground to engage with young people, employers and the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking down the different stages in the forestry process and breaking down the employment opportunities in the supply chain to understand what opportunities there are (an infographic would be great) • A report card back to the community • Improve the narrative around the opportunities • GFH is a long way from East Gippsland and areas impacted by forestry decisions • Important for GFH to be more visible • Small economic development team and good on the ground intel however often get missed in communications • Local government a great conduit to share good news stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need higher level and more dynamic awareness of community values • Need to think across all levels and keep relevant and interesting • Keep it simple; don't over think it